

# The value of listening

Healthwatch Sefton  
Annual Report 2023-2024



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**"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."**

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



# Message from our Chair

During another demanding year of continuing health and social care pressures, Healthwatch Sefton has responded positively and vigorously and we wish to thank all our staff and volunteers for their contribution. Our vibrant network of locality based champions and community ambassadors, listens, gathers and responds to the in-depth real life individual experiences of our residents.

We have built a strong local identity and strengthened our relationship with nine neighbouring Healthwatch organisations, achieving a united and more powerful presence. Increased collaboration within our regional Healthwatch ensures that the voices of 2.5 million residents of the Cheshire and Merseyside region are heard at the highest level.

Healthwatch England is the independent national champion for health and social care and we were delighted to welcome new Chair, Professor David Croisdale-Appleby accompanied by Jon Turner Northwest Regional manager, to a very successful team event at our Sefton base. Guests included Angela White, Chief Executive of Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (Sefton CVS), Deborah Butcher, Place Director (Sefton), with staff, volunteers, People First Merseyside and Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust. Highlighted by a first-hand live account from a user of community services and the help received from working in partnership with Healthwatch Sefton.

In an era of NHS and social care change, Healthwatch Sefton supports and represents our population. Putting forward their views on a host of pressing issues, including dental services, General Practitioner access, Accident and Emergency Department overcrowding and community services following hospital discharge.

(Dr) John Turner MA FRCP  
Healthwatch Sefton Chair

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**We are fortunate to have a really strong Healthwatch network in Cheshire and Merseyside. In 2023-24, our nine local Healthwatch organisations continued to play an influential role in the work of both NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and our wider Health and Care Partnership – as an equal partner and constructive critical friend.**

**I, personally, really value the vital contribution that each Healthwatch organisation – and the wider Healthwatch network – continues to make to our Integrated Care Board, our nine Place Partnerships, and many important programmes of work.**

**Most important of all, remains the unique value that the Healthwatch network brings in connecting system partners to people's views and experiences of the health and care services that we provide – in doing so helping us to identify and implement improvements.**

Graham Unwin, NHS Cheshire & Merseyside Chief Executive

# About us

## Healthwatch Sefton is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS and social care decision-makers, hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

### Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



### Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



### Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



# Year in review

## Reaching out to 3,234 people

with 1756 people sharing their in depth stories and experiences of health and social care services with us, which have been used to raise awareness of issues and improve care.



## Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

**45**

outstanding volunteers who gave up 1,447 hours (equating £16,553) to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.

In 2023 – 24 we received

**£143,250**

which is the same amount of funding from the previous year.



We currently employ

**5 staff**

who help us carry out our work.

## Making a difference to care

## 502 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as accessing an NHS Dentist, NHS emergency dentists, registering with a GP, accessing adult social care assessments, how to raise concerns, accessing medication from their GP practice and cancelled appointments.



## We signposted to 643

organisations and local groups to support people to be empowered about their health and care and make informed choices.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We influenced broadening the reach of an engagement exercise, ensuring that the case for change paper for Liverpool Women's services is presented at the Sefton Partnership board in the summer of 2024.



Sharing concerns from Sefton Carers Centre with the Programme Manager from NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (that unpaid carers can not refer into the 2-hour Urgent Community Response service), we received confirmation that this is now included into the service specification.

Summer



Residents told us that they could not access medication reviews. We raised this at the Sefton Primary Care Forum.

Medicines Management leads and Primary Care Network Clinical Directors agreed to make reviews available to all patients (previously they had only been available to targeted patient groups).



Patients told us that they were being turned away from Phlebotomy appointments booked online as they hadn't picked up a blood form from their GP. We reviewed the website and worked with Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust to make this information prominent and visible on the booking page screen.

Autumn



A local Cancer Support Group told us how difficult it was to access fit to work notes from their GP. We were able to update them that they could request their notes from the hospital, which often can cover the period of treatment and recovery. Members of the group had been unaware of their options.



We helped patients accessing Waterloo Dialysis Centre avoid car parking fines by working with partners at Aintree University Hospital. The hospital has since secured six car park bays on the site with free parking secured on the site opposite until a longer term solution is found.

Winter



Anchor Housing joined our community champion network and in connecting them to other organisations their residents have accessed free painting and mindfulness sessions from Select Training, support from Read Easy Merseyside and support from Sefton CVS to combat isolation and loneliness.



From notifying Aintree University Hospital in January 2023 that a car park pay machine was out of order, impacting patient and visitor experience, we continued to bring this to the attention of the Deputy Director of Estates and Facilities and it was fixed nearly 12 months later!

# Your voice heard at a wider level

## We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Sefton influence decisions made about services at NHS Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

During the last 12 months, the 9 Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) local Healthwatch have continued to work together to provide a strong voice for the 2.5 million people who live, work and use health and care services across our region. We have worked together on a variety of issues, enabling the Cheshire & Merseyside ICS to hear what matters to local people on a much wider footprint and use this to make informed decisions about the provision of health and care services. Healthwatch leads meet weekly, to ensure we are up to date with changes in services, requests for support from the health and care system, and to brief each other on the ICS meetings we have attended. We have also had face to face meetings with lead officers at the ICS. There is an agreed process for working together, which includes a Memorandum of Understanding.



Dental Improvement plan – we have consistently highlighted the dental shortage locally, and we are delighted to see the agreement of a Cheshire and Merseyside dental recovery plan to start addressing some of the challenges. We sit on the Dental Recovery Board that oversees the implementation of the plan.

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"Healthwatch colleagues are fully integrated into the commissioning of services and specific projects across Cheshire and Merseyside and have membership of our programme board which supports the delivery of targeted access schemes. This invaluable input gives us insight into patients' perspectives and experiences and supports decision making. In addition, Healthwatch are regularly in contact with the Dental team to ensure individual vulnerable patients with identified clinical needs can access NHS dental care"

Luci Devenport, Senior Primary Care Dental Manager, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICS.



The Primary Care Recovery Plan agreed by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICS included a section written by the 9 local Healthwatch on what the public expect from GP primary care. This was based on the feedback we had received. We will be working with the ICS during 2024/25 to find out from patients if the plan is making a difference to how they access primary care and improving experience.



Many local people have been experiencing long distressing stays in corridors of Accident and Emergency departments. The nine local Healthwatch have been sharing feedback on how this impacts patients and helped to produce a 'Patient Experience Assessment Tool' for corridor care. Whilst the top priority has to be the eradication of care in corridors, the checklist aims to maintain safety and dignity as much as possible, whilst corridor care remains a sad reality.



## Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why, over the last year, we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

# Making community services equitable and inclusive!

**During 2023 we listened to 127 residents who attended health centres across Sefton to find out how clinic appointments and accessing services in the community worked for them. We also heard from those with a learning disability about their experiences too via People First Merseyside!**

We asked the trust to recognise the barriers that people face as services become more digital and therefore for some, more difficult to access. We asked that systems in place are inclusive and fair and for the trust to consider all patient needs, so that individuals and groups are not excluded.

- We found that the Phlebotomy (blood) appointment system only offered telephone or online booking which is not accessible for all patients. People First Merseyside, told us that people may not have the skills or capacity to use or have access to technology, with many finding it difficult to communicate using a telephone.
- There was a lack of available Podiatry follow up appointments for patients in south Sefton. Staff told us that limited appointment slots are released on a Monday and are fully booked that same morning. Patients told us that they have to ring back week after week to try and book an appointment, resulting in delays to their treatment, resulting in pain and discomfort.
- For those attending Sefton Road clinic, patients with disabilities told us that the reception counter was too high for some patients and being asked to ring a bell to get the attention of reception staff was not a reasonable adjustment.

## What difference did this make?

- The Phlebotomy service offers longer appointments, with staff identifying additional needs on the referral form, staff have been asked to ensure that the 'Red Flag' system is used to identify learning disabilities on clinical records.
- A Phlebotomy survey was undertaken to review access, this included a review of the booking system to ensure the voice of patients was included.
- An improvement plan is in place to improve staff compliance with Oliver McGowan training for Phlebotomists, with managers facilitating time for staff to complete training to improve from the current 85% compliance.
- The south Sefton Podiatry service booking system was changed so that follow up appointments can be booked for patients before they leave the clinic.
- Easy read leaflets are being developed for patients.

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**"Here at Mersey Care we have enjoyed and benefitted from working with Sefton Healthwatch. They are challenging but, importantly, constructive and supportive in their approach. They are a valuable 'window on the real world' and our patients benefit from the brilliant insights they have fed back to us. Thank you."**

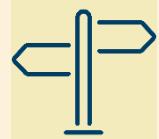
Joe Rafferty. CBE. Former Chief Executive. Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.

# Listening to unpaid carers

## Taking the time to listen to one unpaid carers experience helped one local provider

Unpaid carers have been telling us that they don't know who to turn to for support, with there being a lack of care and recognition for unpaid carers. Information on websites is confusing and they are not always kept up to date. We took the time to record in detail one carer's story, which highlighted the issues facing many unpaid carers and shared this with commissioners and providers to support them to better understand how involving and communicating with unpaid carers can not only improve experience but support care, treatment and discharge pathways.

*"I feel it is a difficult and overwhelming situation to be in, suddenly becoming a carer to a family member / loved one. Through my journey being shared, I would hope for some positive changes for carers to help them navigate the system to get the help and support needed for both the person cared for and the carer."*



## What unpaid carer's need to support them

- Clear signposting to Sefton Carers Centre for a range of support, guidance and knowledge on what can be accessed and how.
- Professionals to be educated on where to signpost carers to.
- Recognition for carers and the role they play in caring for loved ones across NHS and social care services.
- Appropriate access to services that can support unpaid carers in their role.

## Aintree University Hospital listened to the feedback from unpaid carers and...

- Reviewed waiting times in the Accident and Emergency Department and ensured carers are provided with drinks/ refreshments
- Reviewed communication with carers, the trust introducing and rolling out their Carers passport and strengthening their pathway for involving unpaid carers
- Reviewing discharge arrangements and including within their hospital discharge choice policy the duty to involve unpaid carers, strengthening wording within the policy, including how they want to talk to carers and family members about discharge arrangements
- Arranged to speak to the unpaid carer who shared their story with us, recording their story for a video to be used to support in the education of staff, senior management and executives



*"Our stakeholder relationship with Healthwatch Sefton has grown even stronger during 2023/24. Healthwatch Sefton have worked closely with our Patient Experience and Engagement Team to use a range of methods to capture the voice of residents across Sefton. Healthwatch Sefton have also helped us in putting patients and families at the heart of what we do by sharing lived experiences through case studies of Sefton residents. This included a powerful insight into the experience of a carer using multiple services, which has been incorporated into our work on supporting carers".*

Mark McKenna. Head of Patient and Family Experience. Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

# Improving patient experience at Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust

**In July we worked in partnership with Healthwatch Liverpool to hold a 'Listening Event at Liverpool Women's Hospital, meeting with the Non-English Speaking team, taking a 15 step challenge in an Antenatal clinic waiting area, sampling food and speaking with patients and their carers and family members on ward areas.**

We spoke with 19 patients and one family member who told us that staff attitude and professionalism, clinical care, cleanliness, communication and timeliness of appointments and treatment were all positive aspects. In listening to what could be improved, we were told about the following:

- Pain relief
- Waiting times for appointments
- Communication

On maternity wards, we also observed how most cubicle curtains remained closed and with partners able to stay with birth partners at all times we were concerned about those who may be in coercive/abusive relationships and their ability to speak up. In reviewing food options and menus, we also found no evidence of menus in easy read or alternative formats for patients who may find this helpful.

## What difference did this make?

- The trust implemented a quality improvement project so that 4 hour comfort rounds coincided with the 4 hourly vital sign checks which will pick up pain scores of patients and if pain relief is needed.
- The trust will look at various ways to improve appointment capacity including recruiting additional medical and consultant staff, appointments at weekends and explore how it can work with other gynaecology providers to gain support.
- Acknowledgement that the trust needs to have a targeted approach and take a more proactive effort, to use a more diverse range of images going forward so they can be used in communication materials displayed across the trust to support diversity, visibility and inclusion.
- The 'interpreter on wheels' service was reviewed and the service was connected to a stable WIFI connection
- To support with safeguarding and speaking up, laminated posters were displayed in toilet cubicles/areas so a patient can speak up if they have concerns and want to speak to a member of staff on their own.
- Larger pictures of food choices were ordered and are now available in clinical areas for hostess's to show patients and they will speak to staff members who are caring for a patient whose first language is not English to assist with any interpretation requirements.

# Ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

## Bringing services together to educate our communities

Staff and service users at the Bowersdale Resource Centre in Seaforth achieved their Level 1 Award in First Aid Mental Health Awareness. The course was delivered by Select Training. The training was made possible after the Bowersdale Resource Centre and Select Training were introduced through our South Sefton Community Champion network, which connects groups and organisations who work within local communities.



***"We have met so many wonderful organisations through Wendy. We will be delivering the level 1 Awareness of First aid for Mental Health at Expect Limited and Change Grow Live in the new year thanks to the Healthwatch Community Champions network"***

Joanne Wormold, Director at Select Training CIC.

## Working in partnership to increase awareness of the local long COVID service

We worked with Healthwatch Liverpool, Knowsley and St. Helens, running a survey and conducting five in-depth interviews after Mersey Care commissioned us to learn more about patient experiences. People commented on how well the service understood what they were going through – a relief after others around them, including other healthcare professionals, reacted with disbelief.



Based on what people shared, we highlighted where the service could make further change. This led to:

- Improved understanding between the service and those making referrals through visits to GP practices and education about the service and the referral process.
- Clear explanations to patients about the steps that take place before referral.
- Increased and more accessible advice and information, including translated leaflets, an educational event for the Deaf Society, and a vlog about activities to support with recovery.

Mersey Care said: ***"the information shared in the report provides essential learning to help improve areas of need, but also to highlight what's working well, ensuring we continue to develop and deliver quality care that genuinely helps people."***

# Ways we have made a difference in the community continued....

## Improving the experience of those accessing Radiology services across Southport and Formby

In October, we asked Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust to look at feedback reviews patients had shared with us about the x-ray/scan department and how the dignity and privacy of patients is affected by staff attitude. We also shared concerns relating to communication and information within appointment letters about the site location of appointments. Ratings for this service area were low.

- Our feedback was immediately shared with the Radiology Directorate Manager, action being taken with relevant staff. Appropriate steps were taken with staff so that they follow the correct preparation of patients for DEXA scans.
- New staff had recently been employed within the department and as a result of the feedback about appointment letters, staff were immediately reminded about the correct hospital location for DEXA scans. The trust apologised for the inconvenience this had caused to patients.
- The department will pilot a text system which will offer further reminders of the correct location of appointments.



## Listening to parent carers' concerns about the prescription service at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust

During the summer, we shared a report with Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust which outlined the concerns coming through Sefton Parent Carers Forum. They told us that they struggled accessing repeat prescriptions, there were issues with transition to adult services and more concerning, feedback that parent carers were purchasing medication from other sources, whilst some parent carers' were lending medication to others. We encouraged the provider to review the feedback we had gathered and provide assurances.



- The trust acknowledged that the Sefton Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) waiting times were longer than they would want them and confirmed that no patient is waiting longer than 12 months
- A commitment to work with Sefton Parent Carer Forum and Healthwatch Sefton to understand what has been going wrong in transitional care
- Increasing capacity of administration teams within the service
- A review of the prescription services delivery approach was undertaken
- Work took place with the digital team to advance the implementation of an end-to-end electronic prescribing system
- A commitment to generate daily reports for any parent carer whose case exceeds the trusts 14-day turnaround time

*"I would like to take the opportunity to once again express my sincere appreciation to Sefton Parent Carers Forum for providing the feedback to yourselves, and to Healthwatch Sefton for sharing with the trust enabling us to investigate the concerns raised"*

Pauline Brown. Director of Nursing. Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust



## Hearing from all communities

**Over the past year, we have continued to work with our Healthwatch Community Champions, to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs. It is also important that we are accountable to our communities and can show them how we have used their feedback and what has been achieved.**

We ensure our champions have up to date information and offer providers the opportunity to engage with local organisations. This year we have received updates which have included: updates on the Bootle Strand development, Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) Community Connector role, The Life Rooms (Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust), Sefton Safeguarding Adults Partnership, Patches (GP system) and how NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System works.

# Community Champion networks

**Our unique Community Champion Networks were recognised by Healthwatch England in their first annual report 2013, and have continued to expand to help those residents accessing grass roots groups to have their say!**

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone across Sefton. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

We currently have over 40 Community Champion Network members across Southport and Formby and south Sefton. They provide services and support for a variety of different communities including; mental health, individuals with learning disabilities, older citizens, residents who are socially isolated and lonely, unpaid carers (including young carers), Autism Spectrum Disorder/ Neurodiversity, those accessing cancer support services and those who are Deaf/ Hard of Hearing or sight impaired.

## Continuity of care for those with complex needs

The Bowersdale Resource Centre provides support to people with mental health needs and/or learning disabilities in a non-clinical setting. At one of the South and Central network meetings, they shared their concerns that individuals with complex mental health needs are disengaging from primary care and how consistent access to the same medical professional would better support them.

**As a result of what was shared, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (Sefton Place) agreed that:**

- Access to a named medical professional needs to be added to patient records as a reasonable adjustment.
- Staff from the Bowersdale Resource Centre could contact GP practices and request this reasonable adjustment on behalf of their clients. To date they have completed this for 2 of their clients..
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside agreed to support getting reasonable adjustments added to patient records.

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*"For one gentleman we have had reasonable adjustments put into place for his appointments and prescriptions. Staff at the Bowersdale have also been added to his record so that we can order prescriptions via the phone for this gentleman. This has simplified the process and he now no longer feels anxious knowing we are able to support him."*

Jerryann Blaney. Day Care Service Manager Bowersdale Resource Centre

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*"Attending the community champion meetings means I can support both patients in the community and Primary Care colleagues. I can be a conduit of communication between both parties by listening to feedback from patients in Sefton and feeding this back to practices where positive changes can be made. It is also an opportunity to inform patients of the range of services available to them from Primary Care. Its been a pleasure working with Community Champions across Sefton and I have built up a great relationship with them. I can also learn about what services are available in our community."*

Jane Elliot, Commissioning Manager. Localities Sefton. NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System.

# Community Champion networks continued....

## Support for vulnerable mums at a time of crisis

**The Community Champion network provides a platform for NHS and adult social care providers and commissioners to share information on their services and engage locally.**

Colleagues from Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust presented at the South Sefton Community Champion Network meeting informing members about the Silver Birch Maternal Mental Health service and how patients can be referred in. Community champion network members were also given the opportunity and invited to join the co-production group to have a say in shaping services.

Community Champion Network group member, Kindfulness Coffee Club requested their contact information be shared with Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust and following the meeting said:



*'Thank you for this information. I had never heard of Silver Birch before. This information is extremely helpful around supporting vulnerable families that access our baby bank. It extends the support we can offer vulnerable mums in times of crisis. So thank you to Healthwatch for enabling this connection'.*

Healthwatch Sefton staff and volunteers plan and attend outreach sessions across the community champion network each month to gather feedback from local residents. After attending a mum and baby group in south Sefton during October 2023, here is what the community champion network member had to say:



*'It was lovely to see you this morning. Thank you for coming along it's not often that mums with toddlers and new babies get a chance to voice their opinion or concerns. You have made them feel important and listened to'.*

## Education is a big part of what we do

**Community Champion network members across Southport and Formby told us that they were unsure what to tell people when asked how to make a formal complaint about their GP practice.**

We listened to our champions concerns' and arranged for colleagues from NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (Sefton), to attend the network event in November. They listened to the concerns from champions and explained how the process worked. Contact details were provided including; freephone number, postal and email address for the Integrated Care System complaints team. Another good outcome from arranging this, was an agreement that we (Healthwatch Sefton) could facilitate any concerns or complaints on behalf of champions or residents, acting as their trusted advocate.

# Community Champion networks continued....

## Further improvements to urgent care

In last year's annual report we updated on how our network had brought about partnership working between People First Merseyside and North West Ambulance service to address communication issues and work with call handlers. This year, the partnership was strengthened further with the 'Get Involved Group' having a focused meeting in March, to share the outcomes and updates in training call handlers to support individuals with a learning disability and first aid training.



## Supporting our champions to network

We held a joint networking event for both Community Champion Networks in September. The event was held in person at Sefton Carers Centre. Our meetings are held bimonthly online, so this gave both networks an opportunity to meet up in person, introduce themselves, get to know each other and find out more about each other's organisations and groups. Members also shared contact details so they could work together in the future. 18 members completed an evaluation of the event:

- 100% of network members (18) strongly agreed/agreed that the event was what they expected
- 100% of members (18) strongly agreed/agreed that they were able to chat with other Healthwatch Sefton community champion members and find out more about their work/ group
- 94% of members (17) said the session was easy to take part in, whilst one person said more space would make it easier to take part
- 83% of members (15) said they knew more about the community champion members than they did before the event. 3 members (17%) neither agreed or disagreed
- 94% of members (17) strongly agreed that they would recommend joining the Healthwatch Sefton Community Champion networks to other (VCF) Voluntary, Community & Faith Sectors groups

Outcomes from the event (as described by community champions):

- Putting faces to names
- Exchanging contact details
- Finding out more about other organisations
- Meeting other groups
- Sharing issues and concerns
- Arranging meetings to share information
- Learning about what is going on in the community
- Invited to Older Persons Forum
- Explaining possibilities for networking and potential future projects
- Agreed to deliver training to multiple groups



*"Thankyou I really enjoyed it, very informative".*

Community Champion member



# Signposting, Advice and Information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Sefton is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you find services, understand your options, and get the help you need. Whether it's help contacting your GP surgery, looking for NHS dental treatment or making an NHS complaint, we can help.

## This year we've helped people:

- By providing up-to-date information they can trust, including updates on our website from our dental mapping work
- Access the services they need
- Look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis
- Access emergency NHS dental treatment
- Communicate with services and share their concerns

# Arranging follow up care after being discharged from hospital

## Important cardiac review delayed!

Jack had been trying to make an appointment for a number of months following his discharge from hospital. He received a letter for his GP from the hospital when he was discharged, that said that he needed a cardiac review. He was very worried as he hadn't been able to arrange this appointment after a number of times trying. Jack shared that he had found it difficult to book appointments in the past.

### What we did.

We contacted the surgery and explained how Jack had been struggling to access an appointment and we were able to help Jack book an appointment a week later for his cardiac review.

\*Name changed

*"Thank you very much for helping to arrange that, I've not managed to see a GP before now."*

# Emergency dental care follow up treatment

## What happens when emergency dental care doesn't go to plan!

During a seizure, Tom had damaged a front tooth, leaving the root exposed. He visited the emergency dentist for treatment, but the temporary cap had fallen off the next day. He was advised to contact Healthwatch to find a dentist to repair the tooth. Tom has multiple conditions including fibromyalgia, chronic pain, a spinal issue and the pain and shaking he was experiencing was excruciating. The emergency dentist advised he may be suitable for to receive treatment from the special care team, and suggested he contact Healthwatch to support finding a dentist to offer treatment.

### What we did.

We contacted the local dental team, and an appointment was arranged, with a treatment plan put in place.

\* Name changed

*"Amazing help and support and extremely kind. They go out (of) their way to really help you out, deserve all the praise. I am grateful for your help."*

# Supporting families

## Struggle to get continence supplies for children.

Caroline's son was awaiting an autism assessment, and she was struggling to get suitable continence supplies for him to use at school. This was causing additional stress and upset for him as she was having to buy adult pads to use which were far too big, really unsuitable and adding more distress.

### What we did.

We shared contacts for the continence team and contacted them on Caroline's behalf regarding the issue. The continence team agreed to send various samples for a 6 week trial, and to then supply in the longer term once the best product had been chosen.

\*Name changed

*"A friend from Leeds recommended using Healthwatch in my area. Thank you so much for your help, the knowledge and support shared, making contact with services has been great. Your response to calls and correspondence has been brilliant, when so used to services never coming back to me."*

## Dental care for a child with multiple disabilities.

Karen's son has multiple disabilities including chromosomal deletion and global learning deficiency. He had previously seen the community dental team locally 3 years ago. She was becoming desperate to get him seen, but despite repeatedly trying to contact both the hospital and community team, Karen had made no progress. She was really concerned he had black teeth and about the general state of his teeth. Could we help her contact the right team to access a dental check for him?

### What we did.

We contacted the local dental team, and an appointment was arranged, with a treatment plan put in place.

\* Name changed

*"He's been booked in at the clinic, it's such a weight off my mind, have been trying to sort this out for 2 and a half years, thanks so much."*

# We are here to support housebound residents

## Supporting residents to stay well and self care.

John is housebound and couldn't get through to his GP on the phone as the line was very busy. He needed an email address to send his blood pressure readings to the surgery instead. He was also waiting for the community phlebotomy team to visit, but didn't have a date and was worried he would miss them calling, as it takes a few minutes to get down to the front door in the stair lift. We were asked if we could find out the date of the visit.

### What we did.

We shared the GP surgery email address and contacted the community phlebotomy team. We explained John's concern of being taken off the housebound list, if he missed a visit. We were able to share John's mobile telephone number so that the team could ring him on the day so he would be expecting them.

\*Name changed

*"I am so grateful to you for your help, and sharing that information."*

Peter was concerned about his mum receiving the shingles vaccination as she is 83, housebound and immunosuppressed. He wanted to arrange for someone to come out and give her the vaccine.

### What we did.

We worked with the practice manager of the surgery and NHS colleagues, who were able to arrange a visit to the patient and provide the vaccine.

\* Name changed

*"Thanks for all your support with this matter, much appreciated."*





# Volunteering

**We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.**

## **This year our volunteers:**

- Visited communities to promote Healthwatch Sefton and our offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Attended key stakeholder meetings acting as our Ambassadors
- Supported us to hold 'Listening Events' to gather feedback and observe services.

Linda is the locality representative for south Southport. Prior to retirement, Linda worked within the NHS as a Speech and Language Therapist and also as a Children's Services Manager, leading nursing, therapy and audiology teams.



Linda has a keen interest in community led preventative approaches to support health and well-being. She is also passionate about reducing health inequalities especially for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

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*"My Healthwatch role enables me to listen to patients tell their stories in a way that feels most comfortable for them and to share valuable feedback to service providers in order to support service improvements"*

Linda Wright.  
South Southport  
(Ainsdale and  
Birkdale) Locality  
Representative

Barbara is the locality representative for Bootle and is the Chair of the south & central Sefton Community Champion network.

Barbara better known as the 'Duchess of Bootle', won the Merseyside Woman of the Year Community Change award for her tireless volunteer work over the last 45 years, including her roles as Chief Executive of Bootle YMCA, Chair of Derby Park and Director of SAFE Community Homes CIC (Community Interest Company).



Barbara Rouse.  
Bootle Locality  
Representative

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*"In my role, and by attending meetings, I broaden my knowledge on the varied work undertaken by Healthwatch. I wonder what people did before the establishment of Healthwatch?"*

## Do you feel inspired?



We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.

- 🌐 <https://healthwatchsefton.co.uk/get-involved/volunteer-with-us/>
- 📞 0800 206 1304
- ✉️ Info@healthwatchsefton.co.uk

**Former Southport Midwife chosen to represent Southport Hospital at the NHS 75 celebrations in Westminster Abbey.**



Congratulations to one of our amazing volunteers Anne Major, former midwife and current locality representative for Healthwatch Sefton in Central Southport, who was chosen to represent Southport Hospital at Westminster Abbey to celebrate 75 years of the NHS.

Anne was nominated by Southport Hospital for her dedication to the NHS throughout her career, where she cared for patients, relatives and teams within Nursing, Midwifery and Neonatal Care in Liverpool Women's Hospital and Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust.

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*"It was a really emotional day, I am so proud to be part of such a wonderful organisation like the NHS. I am proud to represent both Southport Hospital and Healthwatch Sefton as I am proud of the work that Healthwatch Sefton does in listening to the public's journeys through these services, with the aim of supporting the providers to improve."*

Anne Major. Central Southport Locality Representative.

## Visit from Healthwatch England Chair

Professor David Croisdale Appleby is the Chair of Healthwatch England (pictured to the right with Healthwatch Sefton chair, John Turner). We were extremely honoured to welcome him in November to our offices as part of his tour of local Healthwatch teams across England. David met with some of our partners, community champions, volunteers and engaged in a lively debate discussing the many factors impacting local health and social care in Sefton.



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*"Thank you so much for the time you organised for me to meet with you and so many colleagues: it was a truly memorable and enjoyable experience."*

Professor David Croisdale-Appleby OBE, MStJ, JP, PhD, CSc, FAcSS, FRSS, FRSA, FORS, FRSRH, HonMFPH, HonFCSFSc, HonFAcadMEd, HonFFLM  
Chair of Healthwatch England



# Communications

**We use a variety of ways to communicate messages to members, volunteers, residents and stakeholders**

## **This year we have :**

- Printed our winter newsletter, and posted this out to Healthwatch Sefton community members who did not have an email registered with us. This was in response to a high number of Sefton residents who are experiencing digital exclusion
- Expanded our use of social media to encourage people to share their feedback, volunteer and get in touch with us
- Ventured into new social media platforms including TikTok and Threads
- Continued to send out a weekly e-newsletter to our members and key stakeholders

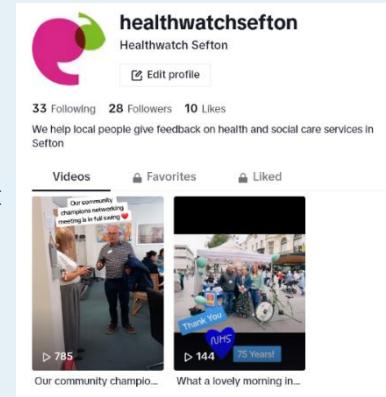
Being sent digital information to access services is becoming the norm for many, however recent data tells us that approximately 6.5% (18,000) of residents in Sefton have either never used the internet, or not used the internet in the last 3 months. Despite financial pressures, the Board of Directors agreed to allocate funds so that our winter newsletter could be printed and posted out to Healthwatch members who are digitally excluded and dropped off at community venues across Sefton. A commitment has been made to fund one more newsletter, whilst seeking external funding.

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*I am 83 and don't have a computer. I am so grateful for your newsletter. I am a diabetic and often struggle to book my appointments and I would like to share my feedback with you. I have information about local groups which meet up in churches where you can reach more people who don't have computer access.*



This year we have been using social media platforms to get news and messages out to residents and our communities and we created an account on 'Threads', the new Instagram text platform. We also set up a TikTok account. We have a plan to develop on this platform over the next 12 months, ensuring that we strike the balance of getting key messages out, in the most effective way to engage with those accessing TikTok.



We ran the 'Meet our community Champions' campaign across our social media channels. This campaign involved interviewing members of our Community champion networks, discussing how their organisation benefits from being part of the network and how the networks benefit the community.

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*When I joined the network our 'Flicks and Friends Cinema showing had 100 people attending and since promoting them with the network, we now get 300 people attending, our lunch club numbers have increased too!*

Helen Shortall. Re-Engage.





## Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Sefton MBC	£143,250	Expenditure on pay	£125,204
Additional income	£3,433	Non-pay expenditure	£24,539
		Office and management fees	£14,550
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£146,683</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£159,191</b>

### Additional income is broken down by:

- £3,433 received from Macmillan Cancer Support for independent project evaluation

## Next steps

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

### Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Prioritising visits to care homes using our Enter and View powers
2. Primary care access (including dental access)
3. Independently reviewing the urgent care treatment centre in Sefton and local hospitals (whilst ensuring the NHS Accessible Information Standard and reasonable adjustments are implemented to ensure the communication and information needs of our residents are recorded and implemented)



## Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Sefton. Sefton Council for Voluntary Service.  
3rd Floor, Suite 3B, North Wing, Burlington House, Crosby Road  
North, Waterloo, L22 0LG**

**Healthwatch Sefton uses the Healthwatch Trademark when  
undertaking statutory activities as covered by the licence  
agreement.**

# The way we work

## Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making

During 2023/24, our Healthwatch Operations Group has had a membership of 16, a mixture of organisations, networks and lay members (residents who volunteer as Locality Representatives). They work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. The Operations Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our community. Throughout 2023/24, the group met five times and made decisions on matters including: gaining assurances from Liverpool University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust about the performance of the Gastroenterology department at Aintree University hospital and ensuring that commissioners understood the importance of including unpaid carers in the direct referral process for the 2-hour urgent community response service. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Healthwatch Sefton also has a Board of Directors which oversees the budget, human resources and governance. During 2023/24 we have had 7 out of 8 director seats filled and the board has met every three months.

## Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a comments section on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums. We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website ([www.healthwatchsefton.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsefton.co.uk)) and will ensure that everyone who requests a copy of the report, receives it in the format they request.

## Responses to recommendations

During 2023/24, all providers we work with responded to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

## Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

Working with partners at NHS Cheshire And Merseyside (Sefton) this year, we have taken information to Sefton Primary Care Forum and Sefton Quality and Performance Group, at which every quarter, we produce a joint patient experience report with system partners to ensure the independent feedback we receive is listened to and effectively used to review trends and themes. We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in NHS Cheshire and Merseyside. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sefton is represented on the Sefton Health and Wellbeing Board by John Turner, Chair. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings and; providing updates back to our Operations Group. From attending a meeting and subsequent meeting with the Sefton Public Health team, we were able to invite a consultant in public health to our September meeting of the Operations Group to have a presentation and conversation about the hazards of vaping.

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